



## **The Bridges Program**

### ***History***

The Bridges program was created in 2005 to serve individuals with developmental disabilities who pose significant risks to themselves or the community. Bridges is licensed as a Center for Developmental Disabilities, and it is administered by a Program Manager and overseen by the leadership of the Beatrice State Developmental Center. The program was initiated on the Hastings Regional Center campus, with many of the staff being prior mental health security specialists from HRC programs. Due to its placement on the HRC campus and various other program issues, Bridges has never been eligible for federal matching and has instead been funded solely with state funds.

### ***Federal Community Integration Requirements***

Federal Olmstead mandates and our agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice require all individuals with developmental disabilities to be served in the least restrictive setting possible, including the individuals we support at Bridges. Many of the individuals at Bridges suffer from psychiatric disorders in addition to their developmental disabilities; these conditions require careful ongoing assessment and consistent qualified staffing supports to ensure the safety of the individuals and those in the surrounding community.

While the current physical location and facilities of the Bridges program were likely the best available alternatives at the time of the program's creation, they do not meet the existing community integration requirements. Additionally, Bridges' vocational and habilitative programs are not adequate to meet the needs of the individuals served by the program. The ongoing efforts to address these challenges are described herein.

### ***Bridges Program Relocation***

During the fall of 2010, the Division of Developmental Disabilities developed a proposal for the relocation of Bridges off the HRC campus. The proposal included construction of three 4-bedroom homes to be built in rural Hastings. The homes were to be designed to be residential in character to address community inclusion requirements; they were also planned to conform to the requirements necessary to receive Medicaid matching funds for program operations. The proposal anticipated costs necessary to address safety concerns, including the addition of 7-10 additional staff and enhanced staff training and program development expenses. The Bridges Relocation Project costs were estimated to be \$1.5 million. The resulting annual savings for the program are estimated to be approximately \$1 million per year.

During the Spring of 2011, the Legislature appropriated capital construction funds for the relocation of the Bridges program. Since then, the Division has undertaken efforts to coordinate with Hastings community leaders, the Nebraska State Patrol, the Department of Administrative Services, and the designated architects to ensure timely progression of the project. In July 2011, the Division met with the Hastings mayor and other community leaders and identified a site that appeared to address the concerns of all representatives present. Although the site is already owned by the State of Nebraska, there were some technical issues that needed to be addressed before the site could be definitively chosen; the Department of Administrative Service has since addressed these technical issues, and we are proceeding with this site. A project schedule, an overview of the site, and a prior survey record of the site are included herein.

### ***Vocational and Habilitation Program Development***

Federally-funded developmental disability services are required to include vocational and habilitation programs targeted at equipping people to live integrated lives in their communities. The Bridges program is staffed with dedicated quality employees who have performed commendable work towards addressing the safety and behavioral challenges of the individuals they support at Bridges. However, much work needs to be done towards fully developing person-centered vocational and habilitation services.

During the past year, despite the restrictive nature of the existing Bridges facility, staff have worked diligently to prepare participants in the program for community-style living. Similar to our efforts at BSDC, individuals at Bridges now do their own laundry, assist with cleaning and mowing at the facility, participate in limited grocery shopping and dining in their living unit, and have been equipped to personalize their bedroom décor. On an individualized basis, the people living at Bridges have also participated in supervised community outings such as shopping, bowling, going to the movies and out to dinner. These activities on site and in the community have contributed to the self-images of the individuals supported by the program and driven many of them to a better understanding of their responsible roles in society and encouraged them to set goals for themselves to gain further independence. It is clear that with proper training and oversight, these individuals can lead fulfilling lives within the Bridges program and others may be safely equipped to move to more inclusive programs.

In preparation for relocation of the program and the obtainment of full program certification, the Bridges program will continue progress in the following areas:

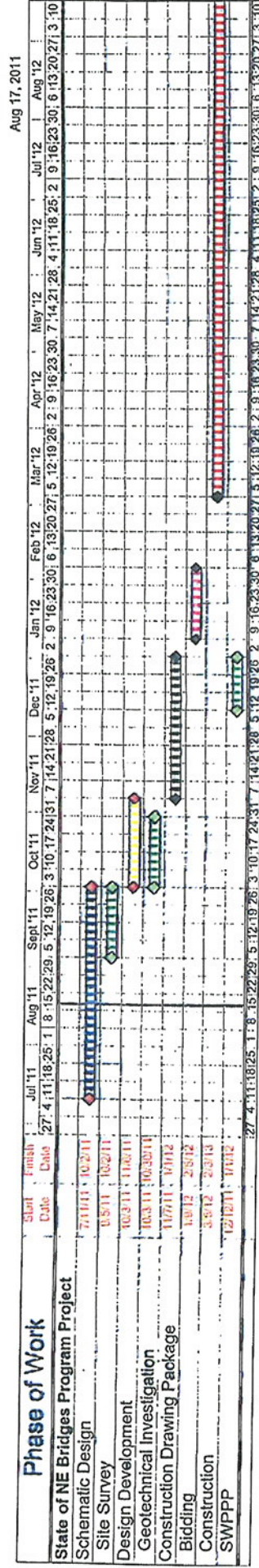
- An additional 7-10 employees will be hired and trained prior to the completion of the relocation activities. Similar to BSDC, the program is also being restructured to ensure that adequate managerial oversight exists on every shift to address the habilitation and safety needs of the program and to consistently ensure regulatory compliance.
- Training in activities of daily living (such as meal planning, cooking, sanitation, etc.) will be provided to the individuals living at Bridges. Other vocational skills programming will be explored as well.

- Enhanced training will be provided to the staff at Bridges in areas such as: functional behavioral assessments, positive behavioral supports, recognition of behavioral triggers and de-escalation techniques, and outcomes-based vocational and habilitation planning.
- An electronic case management system (Therap) will be implemented for incident reporting and for data collection and analysis.
- Program policies and procedures will be revised to reflect regulatory requirements required to meet certification standards.
- Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement processes will be evaluated to determine whether changes need to be implemented to ensure long-term regulatory compliance.

### ***The Goal***

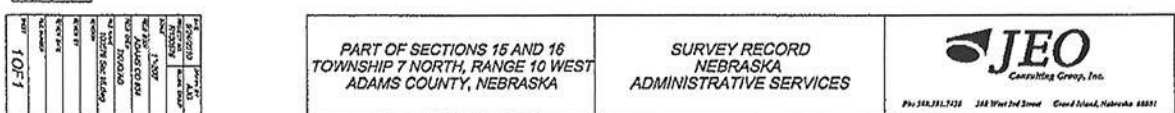
The ultimate goal for the Bridges program is for it to be located in a residential-style setting that provides adequate security. The program's location and services will be fully compliant with federal certification standards. Bridges has enjoyed a long partnership with the Hastings community, and it is excited to continue in this successful partnership to provide quality services to individuals with developmental disabilities with specialized needs.

# State of Nebraska - Bridges Project Schedule









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